

### Book Review of "Greece's Horizons: Reflecting the Country's Assets and Capabilities"

Sotiropoulos, Dimitrios A.

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## **“Greece’s Horizons: Reflecting the Country’s Assets and Capabilities”**

Pantelis Sklias and Nikolaos Tzifakis (Editors)

The Konstantinos Karamanlis Institute for Democracy - Series on European and International Affairs

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### **Book Review by Dimitrios A. Sotiropoulos**

Department of Political Science

University of Athens

Greece

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In contrast to completely negative approaches to Greece after the economic crisis broke out, or to approaches limited to interpreting the causes of the crisis, the volume edited by P. Sklias and N. Tzifakis, both professors at the Department of Political Science and International Relations of the University of the Peloponnese (Corinth), offers a forward-looking perspective. The editors and most contributors to the volume bear in mind and lay out possible outlets for the impasse Greece reached, as the economic crisis which erupted in 2010 was soon transformed into a political and social crisis, while Greece was cornered in international fora too.

Corresponding Author: Dr. Dimitrios A. Sotiropoulos, Associate Professor

Affiliation: Department of Political Science and Public Administration, University of Athens, Greece

Address: 6, Themistokleous Street, Omonoia, GR-106 78 Athens, Greece

e-mail: [dsotirop@pspa.uoa.gr](mailto:dsotirop@pspa.uoa.gr)

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In their concise introduction, the two editors of this volume point not only to the causes of the crisis in Greece but also to the immense efforts the country made in 2010-2012 to recover. They then present each of the volume's chapters in a fair way and give to the reader a main message: *"the book challenges the picture of Greece as a country doomed to failure, where everything falls apart"*.

The book is divided in three parts. The first part is about the political dimensions of the crisis. A. Antoniadis writes a wonderfully researched chapter on how international media has reported on and interpreted the crisis in Greece, showing how after 2010 Greece has become a 'negative signifier' in the international public sphere. A. Tziampiris provides an overview of Greece's foreign policy. He addresses Greece's relations with NATO and the European Union and with its neighbors in Southeastern Europe and the Mediterranean. The chapter is not focused on the effects of the economic crisis on Greece's diplomatic position, which has weakened over time, but perhaps the author's moderate optimism may infuse the re-shaping of Greek foreign policy after the crisis is over. K. A. Lavdas and M. Mendrinou offer a well-documented analysis on how Greeks perceive and trust their national government and the European Union, which follows a political and historical analysis, always in the same chapter, of Greece's trajectory after it joined the Union. Their sound conclusion is that Europeanisation and particularly so the Europeanisation of Greece is "an interactive course through challenges, problems, constraints, and opportunities in a reform-resistant context". M.G. Papazoglou writes a historical and theoretical chapter on leadership in Greek politics. The historical survey covers the period 1974-2012, while the theoretical analysis is informed by the contrast between 'transactional' and 'transforming' leadership. The former involves discrimination and mistrust between the leaders and the led, while the latter mutual support between the two. It is an insightful conceptual distinction, which however hangs somewhat loose with the author's correct insistence on macro-sociological conditions, such as sustainability, Europeanisation and stability, for "rewriting the narrative of Greek politics". S. Ladi reminds us that evidence-based policy is usually absent from Greek policy-making. She nicely interprets past failures of Greek policy making through the theoretical lenses of incremental and garbage can models, in conjunction with the long-term domination of legalism and patronage in state-society relations.

The second part of the book is about the larger economic framework. P. Liargovas and S. Repousis substantiate the claim that Greece will not overcome its economic crisis unless it proceeds with structural reforms. They justifiably focus on reforms of anti-corruption policies, on which the Greek government has not really produced results. The authors wisely underline the need to tackle fraud in the public sector, social security fraud, banking fraud and corporate and political corruption. A. Kotios and S. Roukanas offer a

balanced view of the crisis in Greece and the Eurozone. Their well-documented analysis points to the need of both sides, the Greek side and the Eurozone side, to change course. Greece needs to deeply reform its economy, while the Eurozone needs to change the way it manages crises.

In a parallel way to the above contribution, P. Papadimitriou offers an interesting chapter on the Eurozone and the position of South European economies in this zone. He draws lessons from the past including the first years of the Eurozone crisis (2010-2012) and pleads in a convincing way for a political unification of Europe and an economic re-balancing of the Eurozone.

The third part of the book includes chapters on economic (not 'microeconomic') sectors. G.J. Grigoropoulos discusses shipping and sustainable development in Greece. His is a well-informed chapter mapping the influence of the European Union on Greek shipping and the interaction of the shipping community with the Greek economy. The author could have emphasized much more the very favourable treatment of successive Greek governments towards Greek ship owners which was not reciprocated on their part, but he correctly insists on the importance of shipping for Greece's further development. G. Galanos provides an all-encompassing survey of the all-important tourism sector for Greece. The chapter is packed with useful data, tables and maps, assesses the crisis of the Greek model of tourism and outlines how this sector can help Greece's economic recovery. For one thing, one of Galanos' statistics is revealing: during the last 18 years, 48 different political officials led Greek Tourism, in the capacity of general secretary or minister or deputy minister for tourism.

E. Georgitsoyanni, E. Sardanou, A. Lappa and E. Mylona offer a rare empirical analysis of tourism, culture and economic development. They draw on their study of Sikyon, a community in the south of Greece, combining economic data with an attitudinal survey of residents of Sikyon, showing the benefits of cultural tourism to the community. A. Saiti offers an interesting but rather brief contribution on the role of higher education in economic development, drawing more on the theoretical literature than on the case of Greece. Yet, she is correct to point out the urgent need of radically adapting Greece's higher education to the competitive international environment.

C. Kiparissides writes an illuminating chapter on the energy resources and their use in Greece. The chapter is more of an overview of energy conversion technologies in Europe and the world rather than in Greece, but at the end it offers some interesting ideas about energy production and supply technologies. P. Gogas and Th. Papadimitriou provide a well-resourced chapter on the project of the by now defunct Burgas-Alexandroupolis pipeline.

Their analysis is economic and contains optimistic and pessimistic scenarios for the benefits of the project. The authors could not have suspected that larger diplomatic and political dynamics in the region would have struck down the project, but perhaps they could have distilled a dose of the foreign policy aspects of the project in their chapter. J.C. Mourmouris contributes a solid chapter on transportation as a driver of growth in Greece, although he emphasizes the theoretical aspects and the international experience of his topic rather than the problems and prospects of transportation investment in Greece. D. A. Tsamboulas writes on the role of Greece as a transport node in Southeastern Europe, a role that the country has yet to fulfil. The chapter is endowed with beautiful, but perhaps too many colour maps showing trade flows and routes and planned infrastructure networks of the Mediterranean Basin and South Asia. The author is correct to underline the development potential of the transport sector, if of course Greece ever proceeds to increase the share of GDP devoted to transport infrastructure and to liberalise this sector.

M. Tsampra focuses on the Greek agro-food industry in Greece. It is a rare and nice survey of agro-food agglomerations which ends with the reasonable conclusion that the relevant sector should be much better regulated and supported by a solid institutional context. K. J. Hazakis reviews the benefits of creating special economic zones (SEZs) from a theoretical perspective. He justifiably points to their importance for regional economic development and to the significance of establishing a SEZ in Thrace (i.e. Northeastern Greece), but does not survey the causes of failure of previous successive development plans in Thrace. A.P. Bitzenis and V.A. Vlachos map Greece's Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), channelled mainly to Southeastern Europe and targeted towards services. They claim that such FDI could contribute to Greece's overcoming the crisis, which is true if of course this is put in the wider context of rebalancing the tradable vs. non-tradable goods and services produced by the Greek economy.

The book contains a helpful index but would have benefited from a concluding chapter which would have summarized the findings of its three parts. Nevertheless, the editors have compiled a wide-ranging survey of the horizons of the most important policy and economic sectors of Greece. This book offers a wide-ranging view of Greece, of the kind one finds in rare reports of international organizations, and it does so in a non-technical language. The book is also a good overview of Greece of the period up to the first years of the economic crisis and a useful depository of specific policy ideas, necessary for the country's economic survival and development, after the crisis subsides.